Unveiling the Cultural Dynamics of Women's Leadership Aspirations: A Comparative Study between Western and Eastern Societies

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Department of Marketing, Operations, and General Management

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Abstract (Portuguese)

A disparidade de gênero no ambiente de trabalho, especialmente em cargos de liderança, é um desafio global enraizado na cultura. As mulheres são frequentemente vistas como cuidadoras, não provedoras, enquanto a liderança é associada a características masculinas. As expectativas culturais em relação às mulheres variam globalmente, persistindo até hoje. Mulheres enfrentam obstáculos que as impedem de alcançar cargos de liderança. Serão as expectativas culturais diferentes no Oriente em comparação com o Ocidente? Isso afeta a ascensão das mulheres a cargos de liderança de maneira distinta? Para responder, uma pesquisa com mulheres no Oriente e no Ocidente foi realizada, usando-a como principal fonte de dados, com secundários provenientes de revisões de literatura e estudos similares. Os resultados não se alinharam totalmente com a literatura estabelecida, concluindo que responsabilidades biológicas e históricas influenciam as expectativas culturais, impedindo as mulheres de se tornarem líderes. Refletiu, em certa medida, que o Ocidente está mais avançado em políticas e aceitação de mulheres líderes. Recomenda-se aumentar a contratação justa de mulheres no ambiente de trabalho, com oportunidades como trabalho remoto e horários flexíveis para impulsionar a presença feminina em cargos de liderança.

Declaração: O texto acima foi traduzido usando o ChatGPT para uma tradução precisa, já que o Google Tradutor não forneceu o formato correto.

Palavras-chave: Liderança, Cultura, Mulheres, Oriente, Ocidente.

Classificação JEL: M16 e O57

Abstract (English)

The gender gap in the workplace and more so at the leadership level is a global challenge believed to be rooted in our culture. Where women are seen as the caretakers and not the providers, and leadership is associated with masculine characters. The level of cultural expectations of women varies globally; however, it is evident that it persists to this date. Women face barriers that hinder them from progressing to leadership positions. However, are cultural expectations of women different in the East from the West? Does this hinder women from ascending to leadership roles differently? A survey was conducted on working women across the East and West to address the question, utilizing it as primary research data. The secondary data was from various available literature reviews and similar studies conducted on the subject. A discussion was developed on the data, and a comparison was analyzed to draw a sound understanding of the topic. The survey results did not align completely with the established literature, concluding that biological and historical responsibilities largely influence cultural expectations across the globe and hinder women from becoming leaders. However, it mirrored to a certain extent that the West is more advanced than the East in its policy and acceptance of women emerging as leaders. It is recommended to start with hiring more females in the workplace and, more importantly, a fair practice. Opportunities and policies such as working remotely and flexible working hours can increase the number of women in leadership positions.

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Glossary

FDV   Individualism Versus Collectivism

GLOBE   Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness

GGGI   Global Gender Gap Index

LTO   Long-Term Orientation

MAS   Masculinity Versus Femininity

POI   Power Distance

UAI   Uncertainty Avoidance

E&W   East & West or Eastern & Western

WEF   World Economic Forum

1. Introduction

This section aims to contextualize and clarify the cultural dynamics of women's leadership aspirations in a comparative study between Eastern and Western (E&W) regions. Focusing on defining the research question, the relevance of the topic today, and the objectives, the last part of this section will structure the dissertation.

In most societies, women's representation has been low, often linked to cultural values shaping the society where the perception of women as incompetent leaders persists. The below lines will further shed light on this notion.

To understand the implications of the topic, it is essential to highlight the main theme of the thesis, which is leadership. A subject studied by many scholars in the field, most suggest that leadership is not just about individual qualities but a connection between leaders and followers, where leaders enable followers to work towards a common goal. Multiple studies indicated that specific leadership attributes are more related to males than females. Illustrating the bias that persists within the workplace, often referred to as "think manager – think male" (Northouse, 2004; Schein & Davidson, 1993). This highlights that culture has an impact on shaping societal ideas.

Furthermore, Hofstede's (2001) study on cross-cultural dimensions transformed the understanding of cross business interactions globally, which is still widely used to date. He identified five dimensions, namely, power distance (POI), individualism versus collectivism (FDV), masculinity vs femininity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), and long-term orientation (LTO). The scholar Explained how different cultural aspects may influence societal values and behaviors, also examining the impact of culture in a workplace (Hofstede, 2001). The GLOBE study by House et al. (2004) complemented Hofstede's work by providing 4 more dimensions, one of which is worth noting is gender egalitarianism. The study also further expanded into leadership dimensions across multinational cultures, which Hofstede hadn't explored (House et al., 2004). These studies were used as they provide key insights in understanding the cultural differences that may enable or hinder women from becoming leaders globally. For example, it indicates that the West has made significant progress in promoting workplace equality while the East still struggles (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Virick & Greer, 2012).

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The World Economic Forum's (WEF) Annual Gender Gap Report was used as it offers an excellent background into the challenges women face. The Report examines factors such as the pay gap, parental leave, and the Gender Inequality Index (GII), including political empowerment. These indicators are essential for understanding global inequality (WEF, 2023). When zooming into the data and taking Norway as an example, women's participation in political employment has been notable along with many Nordic countries out of the 144 countries studied; however, compared to the Middle East, the numbers are meager. South Africa has made massive progress within a short period whereas Algeria's progress has been much slower (WEF, 2023). This highlights the importance of acknowledging the disparities between cultures and understanding if such differences shape women's aspirations to become leaders.

Studies demonstrate the positive impact on the performance of an organization and the economic growth women leaders make (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; McKinsey & Company, 2023), illustrating that women are equally successful as men and make great leaders. Nonetheless, women remain underrepresented. Statistics indicate that currently, women hold 31% of leadership roles, varying from one industry to another (WEF, 2023), limiting women's ability to maximize their potential. This sheds light on the importance of the topic; it is linked to the fact that the more women are in the workplace, the higher the possibility of having women in leadership positions, ultimately narrowing the gender inequality gap overall (WEF, 2023).

Despite years of progress across the globe to close this gap, research has found countless factors that have led to it. These include culture, gender biases, stereotypes, and work-life balance (McKinsey & Company, 2023). These are indicated by statistics where 69% of women feel societal pressure to prioritize family over career, leading to difficulty achieving work-life balance. Moreover, a staggering 90% of women do not have the confidence to return to work after maternity leave due to the lack of support in the workplace. This reveals the global imbalance in the distribution of familial responsibilities across various cultures (TeamStage, 2023). This creates a phenomenon called the glass ceiling, preventing women from progressing and confining them to stereotypical roles. (Ibarra et al., 2018).

Several pieces of literature have investigated factors that impact women's aspiration for leadership and, more so, compared them to men. However, a comparison between two different cultures, namely East and West, on the impact it has on women's aspiration towards leadership roles remain unexplored.

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Therefore, understanding women's experiences to become leaders across different cultures is crucial to address the challenges and aiding in policy improvement (Fournier & Grey, 2000; Migliore, 2011).

Therefore, the thesis seeks to bridge this gap by addressing the question: How do cultural influences shape women's perceptions and motivations to aspire to leadership positions? And are these influences different between the E&W cultures?. With an objective to analyze cultural influence, identifications of barriers, comparing the two regions and propose strategies.

The study's structure encompasses five main sections. Starting with the introduction, the chapter sets the stage by contextualizing, addressing the relevance of the topic, and defining the research question. It also outlines research objectives and questions. Following this, the Literature Review section assembles secondary data research to explore the core concepts and theoretical framework related to the research question focusing on leadership, culture, and women leadership barriers across the globe. The third chapter is Methodology, which aims to detail the primary research methods employed for data collection and sample characterization. The subsequent chapter, Results, Findings, and Discussion, will cover research findings, contributions to existing theories, comparison between the E&W, and practical implications. Finally, the Conclusions and Recommendations section discusses the limitations of the thesis and suggestions for future research.

The next section will present the theoretical framework outlining leadership definitions from various scholars, cultural dimensions from multiple literatures available, and differences in women's leadership within E&W cultures utilizing data obtained from various statistics.

2. Literature review

To understand the key variables that affect the cultural dynamics surrounding female leadership aspirations and the impact of the E&W society, this section presents a literature framework to shed light on the key variables in the research question equation. By exploring basic concepts such as leadership, culture, and the representation of women from the E&W societies.

To clarify the impact of different cultures, the author proposes a division of E&W based on cultural similarities rather than economic conditions presented in Figure 2-1. Where The West encompasses countries in Europe and North America along with Australia, and the East includes countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Russia. South America and Southern Africa were not included due to significant cultural differences. Russian culture more closely resembles Eastern culture; thus, it was included as part of the East division.
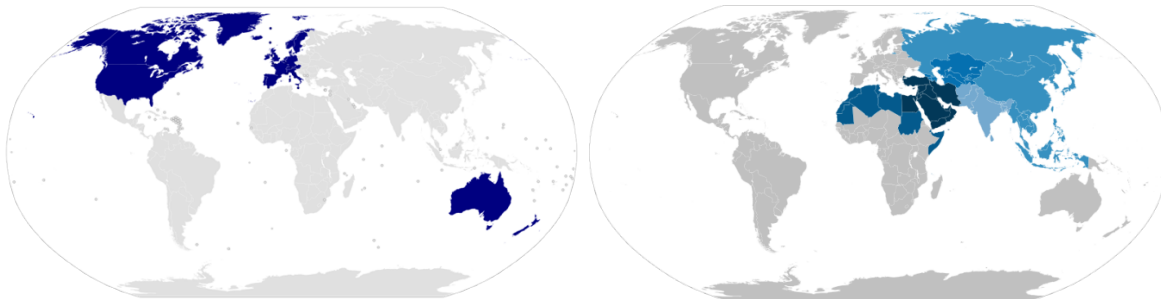
Figure 2-1: On the left the Western division and on the right the Eastern division (wiki, 2021)

Exploring leadership concepts is essential to answer the thesis question. Literature defines leadership as a process, a complex and dynamic exchange of relationships, built over time between leaders and followers and between leaders and groups of followers who depend on each other to accomplish a mutual goal (Hemphill & Coons,1957; Hollander, 1978; Conger, 1992; Tannenbaum, et al., 1961). Of which many scholars have defined it as (Hemphill & Coons, 1957, p.7)- "Leadership is the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal.", (Hollander, 1978, p.1) - "A process of influence between a leader and those who are followers." (Conger, 1992, p.18) - "Leaders are individuals who establish direction for a working group of individuals who gain commitment form these group of members to this direction and who then motivate these members to achieve the direction's outcomes." and lastly by (Tannenbaum, Weschler & Massarik, 1961, p.24) - "Leadership is interpersonal influence,

exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals."

Many scholars indicate that leadership isn't just about individual traits but an interaction between leaders and followers. Emphasizing that all individuals in an organization, leaders and followers alike, are responsible for its success, urging leaders to encourage participation (Stogdill & Bass, 1981).

Many scholars believe that successful leaders have certain attributes that make them great leaders. Some argue that these characteristics are innate and not acquired through training or experience. While others believe leadership skills can be developed for individuals to become great leaders. The Great Man theory by Thomas Carlyle in the 19th century illustrated that leaders are born with these great qualities (Carlyle, 1841; Northouse, 2004). Furthermore, the Trait theory built up on Carlyle's study supported the notion (Allport, 1936). Many other theories were developed, such as Contingency, Situational, and Behavior theory. This shifted the paradigm, explaining that great leaders vary depending on the circumstances (Northouse, 2004).

These traits that make great leaders of which appeared in multiple scholars are intelligence, confidence, determination, integrity and sociability (Northouse, 2004).

Management and leadership, while often used interchangeably, exemplify distinctive concepts. As observed by Kotter (1990), management primarily concerns itself with planning, organizing, and controlling resources to achieve predetermined objectives. Emphasizing efficiency and stability within established systems. Which is a component of leadership. On the other hand, leadership plays a crucial role in initiating action, motivating employees, providing guidance, building confidence, creating a positive work environment, and coordinating within an organization.

There are many leadership styles that encompass diverse approaches used by individuals to guide and manage others; these styles are instrumental in shaping productivity and the overall success of an organization.

Among these styles are transformational leadership, where leaders encourage creativity, empower their team, and often bring about significant changes; transactional leadership, which involves rewarding good performance and addressing poor performance; servant leadership, focused on serving others and emphasizing empathy and ethics; charismatic leadership, where leaders influence through their charm, confidence, and persuasion; democratic leadership, which

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encourages participative decision-making among team members; autocratic leadership a style that has complete control over their team and tend to give direction without much explanation and laissez-faire leadership, allowing followers significant freedom in decision-making and task completion (Northouse, 2004; Lewin, 1939; Stogdill & Bass, 1981).

Besides the understanding of the leadership concept, cultural understanding is an important parameter in the thesis. Many interpretations of the definition of culture exist, among which Edgar Schein's 1997 definition stands out. He defines culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learns as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" – (Schein, 1993, p.32). This definition underscores an influenced perception shaping a group's identity, which becomes significant when examining the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles (Hofstede, 2001).

Culture plays an important role in shaping individuals right from their early years, predominantly through family influence. This early period represents a critical stage for learning. Subsequently, various external factors, including community settings, neighborhoods, and peer groups, continue to shape cultural beliefs and practices.

The idea that culture is acquired stands in contrast to human nature and personality traits, which are inherited (Hofstede, 2001). Figure 2-2 illustrates the three levels of mental programming, showcasing the process by which culture influences individuals.
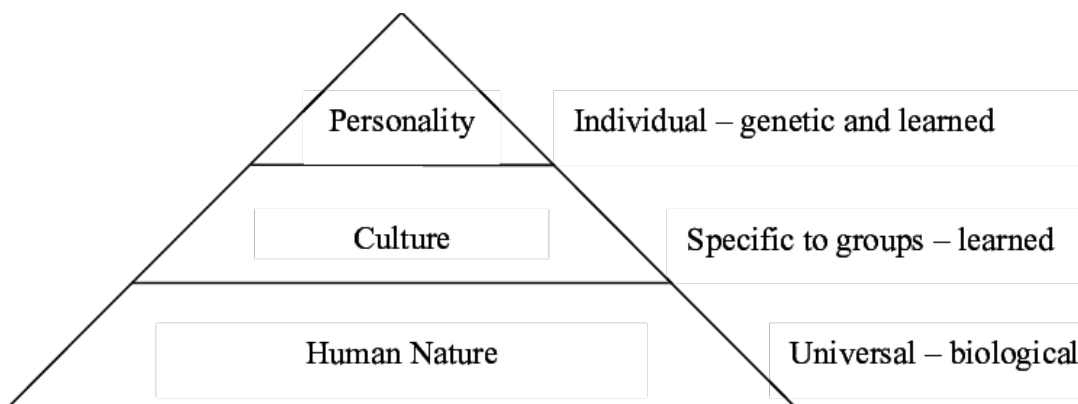

Figure 2-2: Mental programming pyramid

Moreover, Education and cultural values pass down through generations exhibiting consistent characteristics across different societies where parents impart it to their children. (Schein, 1993;

Hofstede 2001). Cultures form shared principles and regulations critical for group survival, highlighting that culture transcends race and family ties, becoming more aligned with symbolic groups in today's world (House et al., 2004).

Additionally, cultures are multi-layered, and individuals belong to various cultural groups simultaneously. These layers encompass national culture, religious affiliations, social class, and generational influences, where a change, especially a deeply rooted value, is challenging (Hofstede, 2001).

Hofstede identified culture in five main dimensions, which are POI, FDV, MAS, UAI, and LTO. To examine deeper the topic of culture, leadership and women, below is an explanation of these factors. The comparison is conducted across the extremist countries, which are Norway and Arab countries representing West and East, respectively, for the purpose of this thesis. It is to be noted that Norway is one of the leading countries in the world in the equality gap index, where the Arab countries are behind; these values are provided in Appendix D.

POI, in cultures with high power distance where hierarchical structures are valued, women might face more challenges in pursuing leadership roles, especially in male-dominated fields. On the other hand, in societies with low power distance, there might be more opportunities for women to take on leadership positions. Significant differences emerge when comparing Arab countries to Norway in this aspect. East exhibits a substantial power distance, standing at 80.

The other dimension is FDV, in individualistic cultures, the emphasis on personal achievement might encourage women to pursue leadership roles, promoting assertiveness. In collectivist cultures, where group harmony is valued, females emerging as leaders is a contribution to society's objectives first followed by individual choice. When comparing the two courtiers, Norway stands at 69 indicating it's an individualistic culture. While the Arab country at 38 highlights that women will step down to take the role of the mother due to societal pressure.

The 3rd dimension is MAS, Masculinity vs. Femininity, which describes the degree gender roles are clearly differentiated within a country. Societies with high MAS might traditionally associate leadership qualities with assertiveness, competitiveness, and decisiveness, traits often linked to masculinity. In more feminine cultures, where qualities like cooperation, empathy, and relationship-building are valued, there might be greater acceptance of female leadership styles. When comparing E&W, Norway's score is 8, signifying greater acceptance of feminine leaders, while Arab countries score notably higher value at 53.

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The examination of High MAS countries such as Japan, Arab nations, USA, and Germany and low MAS such as Norway, South Korea & France, surprisingly depicted shared perceptions in workplace attributes, challenging the stereotypical East-West divide. These nations showcased common workplace ideals, such as emphasizing equality and emphasizing the need for a quality work-life balance. They also shared views on management traits, gender diversity, career ambitions, and family priorities (Hofstede, 1991).

Table 2-1: snapshot on workplace & gender roles differences between High & Low MAS countries as per Hofstede, 1991.

Low MAS	High MAS
Gender roles	
Women describe themselves are more competitive than men do	men describe themselves are more competitive than women do
Gender serotypes rooted in universal biological differences	Gender stereotypes country specific
To Asian women characteristics differ little by gender	To Asian women, responsibility, decisiveness, ambition are for men, caring and gentleness are for women
workplace	
Work in order to live	Live in order to work
Meaning of work for workers: relations and working conditions	Meaning of work for workers: security, pay and interesting work
Stress on equality, solidarity and quality of work life	Stress on equity, mutual competition and performance
Mangers expect to use intuition, deal with feelings, and seen consensus	Managers expected to be decisive, firm, assertive, aggressive, competitive, just
Successful managers seen as having both female and male characteristics	Successful managers seen as having solely male characteristics
More women in management	Fewer women in management
Smaller wage gap between genders	Larger wage gap between genders
Women choose female boss	Women choose male boss

Career ambitions are optional for both men and women	Career ambitions are compulsory for men and optional for women
Managers hold modest career aspirations	Managers hold ambitious career aspiration
Managers less prepared to uproot their families for career reasons	Managers more prepared to uproot their families for career reasons
Women in management take having families for granted and adapt their careers	Women in management take having careers for granted and adapt their families

UAI is another dimension described by Hofstede. High uncertainty avoidance societies might prefer established norms indicating resistance to change, potentially affecting women's opportunities to break into leadership roles. Conversely, in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, there may be more openness to diverse leadership styles and innovative approaches, potentially benefiting female leaders. When comparing Arab countries with Norway, the former exhibits high uncertainty avoidance, whereas the latter demonstrates significantly lower levels in this dimension.

Another study conducted to measure the gender ratio and leadership between men and women found that more female managers were found in countries that scored high in FDV and fewer female managers in countries that scored high in UAI and POI, which further supports the argument (Van Emmerik et. al, 2010)

The last dimension is LTO, long-term orientation cultures might value perseverance, determination, and thrift, which could support women's leadership aspirations by acknowledging their capacity for long-term planning and commitment. Conversely, in short-term-oriented cultures that value tradition and immediate results, breaking into leadership roles might be more challenging for women.

Hofstede found that long-term orientation was negatively linked with individualism and positively linked with power distance (Hofstede, 2001). This suggests that short-term orientation is a product of Western societies while Eastern societies tend to focus on the long-term. The summary of values from Hofstede book is in Appendix D.

The authors would like to acknowledge that although the extremist country representation was chosen, if we consider more countries on each regional division as per the thesis such as USA, Canada, Australia, Norway and Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Egypt etc. we see a striking similarity

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in value, although in context it still stands. Moreover, these values were generated for different purposes that are not typically representative.

The GLOBE study expanded on Hofstede's cultural research by adding 4 additional cultural dimensions and incorporating societal values such as human orientation, performance orientation, assertiveness, future orientation, and gender egalitarianism. These dimensions examined values related to welfare, achievement, collaboration, assertiveness, and gender equality within cultures (House et al., 2004).

The thesis will not investigate the differences between these two studies but would like to highlight gender egalitarianism examined by the GLOBE study, as it will aid in understanding of cultural differences from the E&W. Gender egalitarianism is a dimension that examines the degree of gender equality and inclusivity within society. Cultures scoring high in gender egalitarianism support gender equality, fair treatment, and opportunities for men and women. Offering better opportunities for women to pursue leadership roles. Countries under Anglo, such as the USA, Canada, and Australia, scored medium in practice, but high in value. Whereas the Middle East, which includes countries such as Egypt, Kuwait, and Turkey, scored low in practice and in value, see Appendix D for country division as per the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). Indicating that the Middle East is less welcoming of inclusivity and equality. This is backed up by a study indicating that Eastern cultures maintain stricter gender roles and ingrained stereotypes about women's leadership capabilities. Notably, 71% of women in Western workplaces feel that unconscious bias is affecting their career progression, while 77% of mothers report experiencing discrimination at work during pregnancy, this is even more evident in Eastern societies (Eagly & Carli, 2007 & Ibarra et al., 2018). Globally 42% of women report experiencing workplace discrimination based on gender (Teamstage, 2023). This phenomenon has affected Female Managers in receiving lower evaluations from supervisors, implying that gender stereotypes may have played a role in shaping supervisors' perceptions, which is more apparent in Eastern societies (Lyness & Judiesch, 2013)

Another example is highlighted in Ibarra et al., (2018) stories from various Eastern countries, revealing instances where women faced setbacks in pursuing their careers, often due to family responsibilities or restrictions on travelling without male accompaniment. Additionally, the book underscored striking statistics, while India boasts a similar number of young engineers as the United States and Russia produces ten times more finance and accounting professionals than

Germany, research by the McKinsey Global Institute discovered that only about 25% of these professionals in India and 20% in Russia possess equal qualification to their corporate jobs. Moreover, in China, less than 10% of university graduates are prepared for corporate jobs (Ibarra et al., 2018).

The preceding discussion shed light on leadership and cultural dimensions and their impact on affecting women's progress, whilst comparing the E&W cultures. The following pages aim to examine deeper into these insights and to provide a framework on Leadership and Culture and how deeply cultural perceptions influence women's leadership aspirations.

2.1 Leadership and Culture, the influence of cultural perceptions on women's leadership

The above chapter highlighted the definition of leadership as examined by many psychology scholars such as House, et al. (2004), Tannenbaum and Massarik (1961), and Stogdill and Bass (1981), indicating that leadership should empower followers. It has also further examined the research question and shed light on cultural dimensions from various scholars, as illustrated by Hofstede, indicating how various cultures influence leadership styles, behaviors, and expectations (Hofstede, 1991). To answer the thesis question the below will further demonstrate the influence of culture on Women's leadership.

The below diagram by Klenke K. 1996 illustrates the leadership diamond and the connection of leadership/followership, culture, context, and gender, mapping out the thesis focus. The theoretical model illustrated in Figure 2-3 underlines that these factors are connected influencing leadership in a dynamic means (Klenke, 1996). Context of which leadership emerges imply factors such as, environment, industry or policies. Workplace settings and organizational cultures exert significant influence over societal norms and gender identities. This is supported by multiple studies emphasizing that male leaders excel in male-dominated organizational contexts, such as government, while female leaders demonstrate greater effectiveness in female-dominated environments such as healthcare (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014).

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Figure 2-3: Leadership Diamond (Klenke, 199)

The below graph Figure 2-3, highlights further such disparities between men and women across various industries.
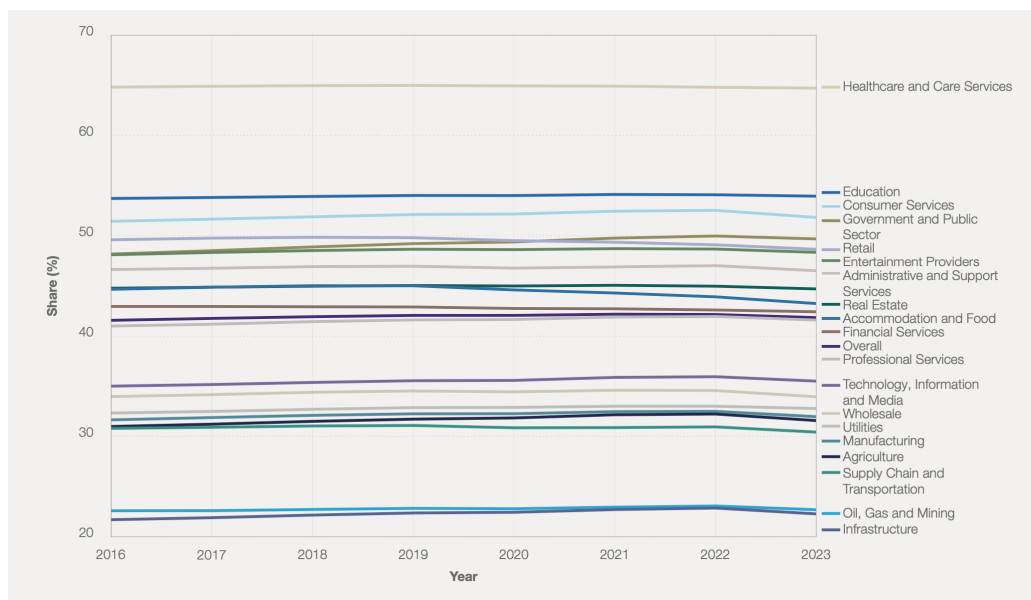
Figure 2-4: Representation of Women share in the workforce by industry 2016-2023 by WEF

The fundamental biological distinction between men and women lies in the fact that women bear children, creating space for variations in the allocation of roles between women and men. This resulted in societies universally attributing certain behaviors as more fitting for females or males; moreover, historically, men were commonly expected to prioritize pursuits related to economic success, while women as caregivers (Hofstede, 2001). A perspective deeply influenced by cultural norms and traditions across the globe. Ultimately impacting women's representation in leadership positions which will be further indicated in the below sections. (Adler, 1986; White & Özkanlı 2010).

President Richard Nixon of the USA once responded to a question about appointing a woman to the US Supreme Court by stating, "I don't think a woman should be in any government job whatsoever, mainly because they are erratic and emotional" (Ibarra et al., 2018). Even though this statement was made in the 20th century, such beliefs persist within also certain Western countries as per the thesis division.

In the previous section, several leadership styles were explained; literature has illustrated that women are more associated with democratic and transformational leadership styles. Exhibiting attributes such as collaboration, inclusivity, and coaching approach, with a focus on team building. On the other hand, men have been observed to exhibit a more autocratic and transactional leadership style, with attributes such as authority, assertiveness, and task-oriented (Eagly & Carli, 2007). A competent manager is associated with more of the masculine character, illustrating the cultural influence hindering women from progressing into leadership positions (House et al., 2004; White & Özkanli, 2010).

A study has found that the more women are in top management positions, the more the goal of narrowing these cultural norms will be achieved (Van Emmerik, H., et al., 2010). Eagly and Carli (2007) highlighted the challenges faced by women attempting to demur established gender norms end up adopting more masculine leadership styles in order to be accepted. This portrays a balance in which women try to maintain authenticity as leaders while associating more with masculine attributes.

The GLOBE study explored leadership perceptions among various regions, which were extracted to support the thesis framework and further highlight the differences between the E&W (House et al., 2004). Table 2-2 summarizes the findings of these grouped into E&W division.

The dimensions outlined by the study are; charismatic, which evaluates the degree to which leaders inspire and motivate others. In the West, charismatic leadership, focusing on individual vision and inspiration, is often admired. In the East, while still appreciated, it is less. This relates to how such attributes are more associated with Women hence fostering a better opportunity for women leaders to emerge in the West. On the other hand, the team-oriented dimension assesses the appreciation of team building and collaboration. In many Eastern cultures, the emphasis on group harmony and consensus-building is stronger; however, varying across and hence less associated with women's attributes in the regions selected, whereas in the West, it is less. If we focus on the Middle East as per Table 2.

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Participative leadership reflects illustrate leaders prioritize individual input in decision-making processes. Illustrated in Table 2-2 it is a clear cut between the E&W. Indicating that assertiveness is an attribute seen for an ideal leader, which fosters less of an environment to women. Humane-Oriented leadership illustrates the degree to which leaders show compassion and generosity toward their team. This dimension, along with the 5th one, autonomous, of which leaders are encouraged to act independently, varies less between E&W, which many scholars believed to be better for The East due to their cultural norms; this is a positive steer for women.

The last one is Self-Protective, which assesses the degree to which leaders use a face-saving approach. Here there is a distinctive difference, where the East magnificently favors this approach in comparison to the West. Which is a characteristic often attributed to masculinity.

Table 2-2: Leadership style preference across different cultures segregated between E&W as per House et.al 2004 study.

Leadership style	West			East		
	Latin Europe	Anglo	Germanic Europe	Southern Asia	Middle East	Confucian Asia
Charismatic	Medium	High	High	Medium/high	Low	Medium
Tram-oriented	Medium	Medium	Medium/low	Medium/high	Low	Medium/high
participative	Medium	High	High	Low	Low	Low
Humane-oriented	Low	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium/high
Autonomous	Low/medium	Medium	High	Medium/high	Medium	Medium
Self-protective	Low/medium	Low	Low	high	High	high

This chapter delved into the connection between leadership and culture that effect women across the globe from being seen as competent leaders or attaining leadership roles. Despite this, an important question arises: are these challenges experienced uniformly across both E&W regions? If distinctions exist, what factors contribute to these variations?

Having understood the several factors concerning leadership and culture, in the forthcoming framework we will explore the realm of women's leadership, aligning with the central thesis goal on comparing E&W.

2.2 Women in leadership roles across the globe

This chapter explores the critical distinctions between women from the E&W regions, utilizing data from WEF with other relevant statistics. It will highlight factors that could influence their aspirations to pursue leadership roles. This will uncover key insights into cultural dynamics that may hinder or foster women's leadership ambitions in the E&W.

The data on women in leadership positions are alarming, women currently occupy 31% of leadership roles (WEF, 2023). This gap underlines the persistent systemic barriers obstructing women's access to decision-making positions. To understand if the challenges women face in attaining leadership roles within workplaces are experienced both in E&W regions, the authors gathered secondary data information on these factors.

The information below was compiled from WEF 2023 dataset encompassing figures from various countries to provide an illustrative overview. Noting that Russia's data is drawn from 2021 within the same reference due to data unavailability. Table 2-3 presents key insights from Global Gender Gap index (GGGI) assessing gender variations in various domains, including economic participation, education, political empowerment, and health. It measures the relative gaps between women and men in these areas to scale gender equality within a country. Health was deliberately excluded as it is outside the boundary of this thesis. The values measure indicate 100=equality, 0=inequality.

Table 2-3: Gender Gap index of some selected countries from the E&W (WEF, 2023)

Country	Overall GGGI	Political empowerment	Economic participation	Educational attainment	Global rank overall
East					
Oman	61%	4%	48%	95%	139
Saudi Arabia	64%	8%	52%	98%	131

Egypt	64%	20%	40%	97%	134
Japan	65%	6%	56%	100%	125
South Korea	68%	17%	60%	98%	105
China	68%	11%	73%	94%	107
India	64%	25%	37%	100%	127
Russia*	71%	8.5%	77%	100%	81 (2021)
Malaysia	68%	9.8%	66%	100%	102
West					
USA	75%	25%	78%	99.5%	43
Canada	77%	37%	74%	100%	30
Australia	78%	41%	74%	99%	26
Germany	82%	63%	67%	99%	6
Portugal	77%	35%	75%	99%	32
France	76%	34%	72%	100%	40
The UK	79%	47%	73%	100%	15
Norway	88%	77%	80%	99%	2
Greece	69%	14%	68%	99%	93

*Russia values are from WEF 2021

GGGI reveals significant regional variations in women's representation especially when looking at Political Empowerment between the E&W as per the thesis division, with West at more than 75% and the East at less than 65%, this is further presented in Appendix B. Described in Table 2-3 for political empowerment Oman is at the lowest at 4% and Norway is at 77% which is the highest from the data presented. Despite notable progress, barriers still exist for Omani women in the workplace that are shared across the gulf. Which includes pressure to prioritize marriage and childbearing due to societal norms. Moreover, the private sector policy is unsupportive of working mothers, with a patriarchal tribal structure and values that restrict women from working (Liloia, 2022). It is clear that Europe leads in women's political representation. Noting that the Western part maintains stable growth. On the other hand, the Middle East and North Africa, declined significantly in 2021, driven mainly by a drastic drop in Algeria from 26% to 8%. Several countries, including the UK, have over one-third, but less than half of their representatives are

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women. Moreover, women constitute less than one-third of parliamentarians in 28 countries, including Canada, the USA, and Japan. Emerging markets such as China and India which are part of the Eastern region exhibit varying levels of women's representation. Despite a period of stagnation between 2013 and 2021, the year 2022 saw an increase primarily attributed to India. Where a female president assumed office after the 2022 presidential election. Since January 2022, a total of nine women have risen to positions of power, with eight of them still in office as of March 2023 (WEF, 2023). Regional differences persist, with formal barriers to women's electoral participation still evident in some parliaments, such as Japan and France which challenge the notion that socioeconomic and democratic development are prerequisites for women's progress. This is exemplified by higher female representation in Mozambique (9th), South Africa (10th), and Venezuela (11th) compared to countries like the USA (50th), France (59th), and Japan (94th) (WEF, 2023; Norris & Inglehart, 2004).

Despite increasing policies to close the gap of gender equality in leadership, these numbers are still very low, emphasizing the need for more effort and strategies aimed at dismantling biases and stereotypes to establish inclusive environments that empower and facilitate women's rise to leadership roles (WEF, 2023).

To further aid the understanding of the two similar examples from the E&W countries presented in Table 2-3, the below data in Table 2-4, show key important criteria to assess the possible factors in impacting leadership positions between the E&W. The data is also obtained from WEF, 2023 unless otherwise indicated. The definitions of what the results mean are in Appendix C.

Table 2-4: Factors of some selected countries from the E&W to establish reasoning of Women Leadership (WEF, 2023)

Country	Gender Pay gap	Parental leave	Advancement of Women to leadership role	Labor force participation rate	Wage equality for similar work
East					
Oman	No Data (1)	Female 98, Male 7 ***	5.25	42%	0.79
Saudi Arabia	43% (2)	Female 70, Male 3	5.41	44%	0.74
Egypt	25% (3)	Female 90	5.63	22%	0.79

Japan	22.1%	Female 98, Male 28	4.13	76%	0.62
South Korea	31.1%	Female 90, Male 10	4.56	75%	0.62
China	21% (4)	Female 158, Male 14	5.09	82%	0.73
India	28% (5)	Female 182	3.74	37%	0.51
Russia*	23.7%	Female 140	4.84	87%	0.72
Malaysia	21% (6)	Female 60	5.31	69%	0.74
West					
USA	16.9%	Value 84**	5.28	84%	0.77
Canada	16.7%	Female 105, Value 210	4.97	88%	0.67
Australia	15.3%	14 Male, Value 126	5.20	87%	0.66
Germany	14.2%	Female 98, Value 300	4.79	84%	0.61
Portugal	11.3%	35 Male, Value 78	4.98	86%	0.62
France	11.8%	Female 112, Male 25	4.91	87%	0.61
The UK	14.4%	Female 42, Male 14, Value 231	5.10	86%	0.70
Norway	4.6%	Value 112	5.69	85%	No data
Greece	5.9%	Female 119, Male 18	4.66	74%	0.64

*Russia values are from WEF 2021 | **Value from US federal Labor Law | *** Paternal leave updated as per new law

1.There exists no reliable data for Oman. | 2. Value from Clingan, L. 2018 | 3. value from Marwa, B 2014 | 4. value from Pang, P. & Zhao, S (2023) 5.value from Walter, D & Ferguson, S (2022) | 6. Value recorded is specific to managers role, for the purpose of comparing women leadership from (BTE, 2023)

Table 2-4 shows a significant gender gap in the East in comparison to the West, as well as. female participation rate in the workforce for most Eastern countries is significantly lower to the West.

Other data exists that present similar data: 72% of women expressed facing conflicts to achieve work-life balance, and 61% of women stated that motherhood hinders their career progression opportunities. Statics show that women spend approximately 4 hours and 25 minutes daily on home care, whereas men spend 1 hour and 23 minutes. If the current trends persist, it is estimated that the gender gap in unpaid care will take 209 years to close (TeamStage, 2023).

Furthermore, numerous studies established how motherhood is linked to the employment gap. Research conducted across 51 countries indicates that about 46% of mothers with young children are employed in comparison to 53.2% of women without children, signifying a penalty for motherhood.

Moreover, while 184 countries offer maternity leave averaging 98 days, the availability of such support varies globally, with only 105 economies providing an average of 5 days of paternity leave. Notably, the absence of mandated paid family leave in the USA stands out as a unique outlier globally (TeamStage, 2023). These statistics are similar across the E&W showing similar challenges women face across the globe. To bridge the gap, Table 2-4 illustrates the possibilities of which parental leave can potentially close the gap by giving paternity leave options, which is higher in the West compared to the East equating a positive trend with GGGI (WEF, 2023).

Furthermore, Western societies are transitioning towards more egalitarian family values, fostering an environment of choice, which can positively impact women's pursuit of leadership roles if they decide to grow in their careers. When it comes to elderly care, it is common to place them in nursing homes in the West. However, the burden of caring for aging parents is prevalent in the East. In contrast, in the Eastern region, women are less encumbered by child-care responsibilities due to active grandparental involvement and accessible domestic help compared to the West (Ibarra et al., 2018).

Women predominantly shoulder the duty of family care in both cultures. However, it appears to stem from distinct drives. Where in the East, it arises from societal expectations, while in the West, it is a choice (Radford, 2017; Bolman et al., 2017).

The term "glass ceiling" is commonly used to illustrate the barriers preventing women from rising beyond a specific organizational level. However, the presence of women in such roles

challenges this view, as it overlooks the unequal access women and men have in midlevel positions. Ibarra et al. (2018) suggest that the challenges faced by women in leadership journeys varies and occur at multiple points before reaching the highest level. Acknowledging such barrier is essential due to the potential danger to divert resources away from interventions that could more effectively address the issue (Ibarra et al., 2018).

The present section, highlights secondary research data from WEF on the GGGI along with other statistics illustrating a clear gap in the representation of women leadership across the globe. To address the dissimilarities in women's leadership aspirations between the E&W, the primary research data analysis will be presented in the subsequent sections. reflecting on the thesis methods employed to gather the desired data, followed by an analysis of results and findings.

3. Methodology

Section 2 highlighted secondary data from the literature review, where this section will explore the primary research methods used. The survey questions aim to underline the influence women face in rising to leadership roles, particularly the differences from the E&W. The results are presented in quantitative and qualitative means.

Survey Participants will answer a series of 19 questions in total. 6 are demographical questions that target understanding women's work positions and industries from Europe, North America, and Australia classified as the Western region, and countries in Asia, Russia, and the Middle East as the Eastern societies. African and South American continents were excluded due to their unique cultural characteristics. The survey was issued on GoogleDocs, an online platform that was shared across Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn & Redditt. A total of 92 responses were received, of which 11 responses were deemed unusable as they were from men or non-binary individuals and 7 were from outside the geographical scope of the thesis as described above. The sample consists of 92% women; 64% are from the East, and the remainder from the West. The survey was conducted over two months between October and November 2023.

The total number of used data is 76. The age group was tailored to working women with professional experience, with a minimal number of respondents aged between 18-24 years old. Although some of these participants lacked professional experience, their answers were checked and it was proven usable. 86% of women from the E&W region fell between the ages of 25-48, and 79% held either a Bachelor's or Master's degree. Notably, 14 women hold supervisory or managerial positions, and the majority work in technical roles.

The remaining 13 questions, of which 12 are closed-ended questions, were used as quantitative data. The questions here aimed to define the research objective. Starting with an inquiry into women's personal aspirations for holding leadership positions, this question particularly helps provide insight into the participants' motivation to know if women from the East are as driven as the West. The next question aimed to clarify the influence of cultural norms and traditional gender roles on their perceptions and aspirations; participants were asked to rate it on a scale of 1 to 5. Therefore, establishing an understanding if differences arise from the E&W. The 4th & 5th yes or no questions explored instances where women might have adapted their leadership aspirations to align with cultural expectations due to internal or external factors. This sheds light on the notion

expressed that Eastern women usually act upon external influence, whereas Western women act on internal influence. The survey then studies a different parameter, which is workplace environment, to understand the bias or stereotype that potentially still persists within the globe. It then examined the role model influence to compare it with the E&W. This underlines if such environments foster a positive impact for women to aspire to leadership positions. The 9th question in this part surveys what motivates women to pursue leadership roles; the participants were asked to select variables such as a passion for the field, professional growth, mentorship, etc. This question was crucial to examine if the literature review suggested by multiple scholars is similar or different for women across the globe. The last three questions requested participants to articulate their opinions on the differences between the E&W in influencing women's aspirations to become leaders. With a follow-up question exploring the influence behind their observations requesting them to select from a wide range of reasons such as family expectations, lack of role models, personal drive, and a supportive environment. This particular question was designed to delve further into women's own perception, which is interesting as it articulates whether women, specifically from the East, might feel deprived of becoming leaders just because of the region in which they were born.

The survey concludes with an optional open-ended question inviting participants to share any additional insights or experiences on how culture might have had an impact or influenced their decisions; particularly designed to understand further the narratives. A total of 10 answers were obtained from this question.

Due to the focus being on quantitative data, only one open-ended question was surveyed to be used as qualitative data.

The methodology section aimed to contextualize, explaining surveyed questions as a method to collect primary data and results obtained from working women to understand how cultural dynamics in the E&W influence women's aspirations for leadership roles. The survey gathered insights into women's aspirations, workplace impact, gender roles, and familial expectations to draw a conclusion on the support women have to progress toward leadership positions.

The next section will present and discuss the results and findings obtained, shedding light on how these align with or challenge the existing secondary data.

4. Results, Findings and Discussion

This section will analyze the surveyed data obtained as primary data while comparing it to the secondary research data. The discussion will also utilize similar studies conducted as per the thesis topic to compare the E&W influence on women becoming leaders.

As indicated in the methodology section, the primary research utilized an online survey that garnered a total of 92 responses, with 11 responses deemed unusable as they were from men or non-binary individuals and 7 from outside the geographical scope of the thesis. The research sample consists of 92% women, with 64% from the East and the remainder from the West.

When looking at aspiration differences between men and women, women tend to be less inclined to pursue a career in leadership compared to men. Highlighting that women are more likely to confine their ambitions to junior management positions. Additionally, female managers exhibit lower levels of career confidence (Franze, n.d.). However, how is this different across women from the E&W?

The collected data when women were asked "Do you aspire to hold leadership positions?", 63 out of 76 individuals affirmed their ambition for such positions from both E&W. The finding isn't parallel to what is indicated in the literature review highlighted above, however, it is important to note many of these were comparing women to men. The finding, however, mirrored the results when compared with a survey by Ibarra et al. (2018), indicating that women from the UAE and India expressed ambition at 92% and 85%, respectively. However, only 36% of women in the USA identified themselves as highly ambitious (Ibarra et al., 2018). This suggests differences to the notion that is usually assumed about Eastern women that goes beyond traditional roles.

Nevertheless, the clear affirmation of women's desire for leadership roles across regions indicates a shared ambition. While women aspire to become leaders, various barriers hinder their progress as explained in the above sections. It is believed when women are given equal chances to pursue such positions, they will raise (Tate & Yang, 2015).

Therefore, exploring the percentage of such influence is crucial. Across the E&W, 3.39 and 3.28 out of 5 average responses confirmed that culture and gender roles, respectively, have an impact on pursuing leadership roles. The finding, although not substantial, is aligned with Hofstede's (2001) and House et al. (2004) research, which suggests that cultural norms, biological

nature, and historical context play a role in shaping societal expectations and perception. Ultimately hindering women from becoming leaders globally.

However, there is also a discrepancy when comparing the East to the West. The survey reveals a similar influence between the two cultures. Unlike what is indicated in the literature review, the Western culture also hinders women from attaining leadership positions. This is also indicated by a statistic that states that 29% of executive positions are held by women in Germany, making it one of the lowest countries in the EU (Eurostat, 2022). A country that is considered advanced in closing the gap of equality from the Western division. From the open-ended question as part of this thesis survey, a woman from the Western division stated the following: "I myself was compared to a terrier dog by a senior manager, a supposed compliment as I get things done. If I was a man, I would be called a success, not a dog". In a similar study conducted to explore women's leadership by Sidani et al. (2015) in Lebanon and Hodges 2017 in Saudi Arabia as part of the Eastern division. From the interview questions, many expressed leaders and women can't be associated together, and there is a major gap for the East to become remotely close to what the West has accomplished, which is more aligned with literature reviews.

This is also supported by a survey conducted between the USA and Taiwan addressing women's leadership, which revealed that the latter were more inclined to turn down leadership roles to take care of the family (Chao & Ha, 2019). However, when comparing India with the USA, Table 2-3 shows that both countries represented by E&W show a gap in political empowerment, with 25% for both, indicating the survey is not far off from these data (WEF, 2023).

This raises questions about the degree of cultural differences between the Western division. Although the West is close to closing the political empowerment gap compared to the East, it was also evident from the GGGI presented in Table 2-3 and the two mentioned scholars' studies there were varying values across the West. Nevertheless, it is also believed that due to the fewer participants from the West in comparison to the East, the differences emerge, suggesting further investigation.

The next question was about the internal influence women face to modify their aspirations of becoming leaders. The responses were evenly divided between yes and no, with an equal influence of cultural expectations among participants from both the E&W. Contradicting the literature review, which suggests women from the West embrace more individualistic behaviors and freedom of choice compared to the East, particularly by Hoftedge (2001). Furthermore, a similar

conclusion was drawn from Evan D. (2014) exploring women's aspirations in France, indicating that Western women are increasingly opting for later marriages and having fewer children. Which suggests more opportunities arise to pursue further career advancement. She also explained that there is a growing trend in providing supportive facilities such as nurseries, remote work options and flexible work schedules, to prevent women from experiencing career setbacks after childbirth (Evans, 2014). While comparing another study showcased that women in India are struggling to establish a work-life balance (Weber & Cissna, 2020).

The following question explored a similar aspect of the previous question; however, it is more in regards to the external factor of family or societal expectations on their pursuit of leadership roles. 27 out of 76 respondents yes, among these 9 individuals are from the West out of the 23. Moreover, 8 out of the 27 respondents hold managerial positions from both regions. This finding shows a misalignment from the literature review in many ways.

Starting with the low value obtained and the high number of Eastern participants, the values are not aligned with Hofstede (2001) & House et al. (2004); the dimensional studies suggested that the East is far more likely to experience setbacks due to family expectations. Furthermore, analyzing data from WEF, 2023, addressed in Table 2-4 on parental leave policies, indicates that the Western region shares more equal rights than the East. Despite this, the survey showed different results. However, it is very evident that the glass ceiling phenomenon faced by women ascending to higher leadership roles exists, supported by 8 manager responses.

When looking at a study conducted by Sanchez & Dalmia (2018), which explored women leaders, it implies that women in the West are interested in positions and highly qualified, but barriers stand in their way as they experience gender stereotype, social factors and individual barriers. Explaining that usually, women who are hired as leaders are in lower-level positions. Which mirrors the struggle in the East.

Nevertheless, it is believed that the discrepancies in findings are attributed to the way the question was worded. The question reads, "Have you experienced any family or societal expectations that influenced your decision to pursue or not pursue leadership roles? (influenced by external factor)," which suggests that the participants have undergone a setback. As evident, half of the participants who hold leadership positions where the barriers usually become more apparent have experienced an impediment. As for the East not experiencing such a barrier it can be attributed to the fact that when it comes to elderly care, it is common for the West to place them

in nursing homes. However, the burden of caring for aging parents is prevalent in the East. In contrast, in the Eastern region, women are less encumbered by child-care responsibilities due to active grandparental involvement and accessible domestic help compared to the West (Ibarra et al., 2018). It can be supported by the finding from Ishii-Kuntz (2022) when comparing Japan with Norway; both expressed there are challenges in caregiving duties. However, Japanese women highlighted experiencing more difficulties. With Norway leading the chart, as shown in Table 2-3 on GGGI, this indicates women are the main caregivers despite the cultural differences.

Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that the West are experiencing less penalty when it comes to societal expectation than the East.

The survey further explored workplace relationships. In accordance with Hofstede (2001), the physical environment is important for job advancement. The results showed that 3.68 out of 5 find their current workplace supportive in fostering women's leadership aspirations. When comparing the results between the two regions, the East indicated lower numbers compared to the West, paralleling the literature review and WEF (2023) data on workplace support, indicated in Table 2-4. These similarities are also addressed by Hodges (2017) in Saudi Arabia and India by Weber & Cissna (2020), where discrimination and serotypes are very evident in such cultures. Japanese women reported instances of gender inequality in the workplace compared to Norway (Isshi-Kuntz, 2022). It is worth noting that workplace environments are yet to improve worldwide.

Participants were asked about role models in their culture, "How do you perceive the representation of women in leadership roles in your culture?" The average rating was 3.29 out of 5. With 53 responded yes being influenced by a role model. This highlights the importance of women's representation to women who aspire to be in such roles. Unfortunately, the numbers across the globe are low; however, they are alarming in the East more than in the West. This is clear in Table 2-3, which illustrates a clear gap. The values mirrored an assessment conducted on Women's leadership comparing the GLOBE study. Showed that the Eastern part indicated there need to be more leadership positions and better environment to foster women becoming leaders. Interestingly, the values assessed in the study showed even lower numbers than the GLOBE study (Wendy, 2015). A theory presented by Fritz (2020) indicates that the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles is due to gender bias, which therefore, creates a cycle where women become less motivated to pursue leadership roles (Fritz, 2020). Connecting the first part of the survey to this part.

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Moreover, 79 answers highlighted reasons such as professional growth, the desire to influence, and passion for their respective fields are factors that drive them to become leaders. Which highlights an alignment between career advancement and personal fulfillment for women, rather than financial incentives parallel to what is suggested in the literature review. Furthermore, the survey showed, similar motives from E&W. Despite the exceptional talent women bring to an organization, they still encounter barriers in the form of gender stereotypes. Global data illustrates the positive impact of increased female representation in leadership, linking it to organizational success (Weber & Cissna, 2020).

Lastly, participants were asked whether there are differences between E&W region in supporting women's leadership roles. The results indicate 53 participants agree to the disparity. 98% of Western women particularly acknowledging societal norms and gender stereotypes is the reason why Eastern Women might face setbacks in becoming leaders. This is in line with existing literature. The high value was anticipated during the construction of the question, which elaborate on the fact that women in Eastern society do see themselves progressing in environments that is encouraging to emerging leaders, which further illustrate the cultural bias in Eastern societies exists and many to date experience it. This draws a conclusion that Women in Eastern region is heavily influenced by culture, discouraging them from progressing in the ladder. 3 participants did not believe there exist differences between the two regions, and 17 were not sure; these values are insignificant.

Below is a summary of women's responses to the open question.

Table 4-1: Responses from different societal regions on the subject of women's leadership between the E&W.

Division	Repones to anything they would like to share regarding the subject
Eastern Region	I did feel wether consciously or unconsciously taking decisions for my next role or what I wanted to become in the future especially when graduated, was influenced by societal expectations. If I was not having these thoughts in the back of my mind I would of definitely pursued an alternative role.
Eastern Region	Women need further empowerment to reach to executive level as to them extra effort is required
Eastern Region	Depending on the support a women has, cultural norms can heavily influence whether she pursues leadership roles and aspires to progress in her career. There will

	always be preconceptions on what an Arab women should be doing but having the right support system gives a women the strength to pursue these roles.
Western Region	Women in mediterranean countries still have to deal with dificult choices between career/learning paths and family, so i think my generation wants to be more represented and turn companies leaderships more work-life balanced
Eastern Region	I believe women around the world west or east all tend to go the same stereotype where you would see women are less comparing to men in the leadership positions. Mainly it's got to do with the overall environment and mindset of culture stereotypes as well how the country works in general. Sometimes tradition and religion could as well have some Influence.
Western Region	Need more women with leadership roles
Eastern Region	Comparing to old stories of women getting positions in leadership to the current situation. I believe the cultural effect is relaxed in the recent years. Also, I believe these kind of cultural effect is really varying from one company to another based on the company community and its composition of people from different areas of Oman. The companies which are basically outside Muscat with less variation of people will mostly prefer men over women in a leadership position. The situation in Muscat is not perfect but much way better than other regions in Oman. Many other aspects such as family are influencing these decisions. However. as I said these factors enhanced in the recent years by noticing the woman position in the society.
Western Region	Women are expected to be the providers of the others in italian culture, often having to submit their own needs. I would like to show others I can make the two coexist and have in this the full support of a partner, subverting the role of woman = just a mother
Western Region	In Eastern cultures live-in domestic help is more common enabling women to pursue their careers if they wish. I did not have this support, nor the support of a family living close by as a young mother and I stepped back from pursuing my

	career, turning down promotion as I felt I couldn't effectively juggle young children, domestic running of the house and a high pressured job. This set me back 5+ years. However I was always encouraged to work and be financially independent by my mother. In the East, I believe pressure to conform with expectations of wider and extended family is greater and this can be a barrier to pursuing a career and attaining a leadership role
Western Region	Just simply that although I am, and many women are, in leadership roles, for many of us this is at the cost of having our own family. Opinions of us (usually observed by males) is that we are Terrier dog like. I myself was compared to a terrier dog by a senior manager, a supposed compliment as I get things done. If I was a man, I would be called a success, not a dog.
Author from the Eastern Region	I have always wondered on whether our opportunities from the East were matching the West, which indeed what pursued me to delve in the topic out of passion. I did believe before starting the research that although Women are underrepresented, women in the West culturally were more able to pursue their leadership positions. Now I'm not very far off from obtaining a leadership position in my current role in the company and I'm not married, but I do see the future holds me from progressing further to cater for my family.

The open-ended responses highlight the impact of societal expectations on women's aspirations across E&W. Respondents from both parts indicate similar limitations. To take a few striking examples: from the Western region, "Women in Mediterranean countries still have to deal with difficult choices between career or learning paths and family, so I think my generation wants to be more represented and in turn, companies need to encourage more work-life balanced", This isn't far off from the rest of comments provided by the Western region all of which suggest that more women in leadership positions especially in upper management are required, work-life balance is a struggle mirroring similar challenges faced by Eastern women. Another example by a participant from the East, "Depending on the support a woman has, cultural norms can heavily influence whether she pursues leadership roles and aspires to progress in her career. There will always be preconceptions on what Arab women should be doing, but having the right support system gives a woman the strength to pursue these roles". This indicates that an environment and culture largely

influence women in the Arab region to become leaders. Many of the same regions and Western regions echo similar opinions.

These comments draw importance on factors that influence women in becoming leaders beyond cultural norms, which are, organizational and government policies, working environment, mentoring and organizational culture; these can be in the form of, better parental leave, working-from-home options, flexible hours, coaching, training and programs, fair hiring practices and zero tolerance toward discrimination (Ibarra et al., 2018).

The survey findings show results that are contrary to what is established in the literature. The author believes the reasons account for an imbalance of regional responses, where the dominant participation is from the Eastern culture, which prevented reaching a comprehensive understanding of the Western perspective. Secondly, while the West demonstrates more advancements in promoting women's leadership roles in literature and in values, illustrated by several factors such as women's representation in parliament, labor force participation, wage gap, and parental leave policies, it's evident that biological and historical responsibilities predominantly shape societal norms, across the E&W parts.

The next final section will draw a conclusion based on the findings from primary and secondary research data obtained to address the proposed research question: "Do cultural differences between E&W impact women's aspiration to become leaders?".

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The thesis started with an introduction to the research question followed by an illustration of leadership definitions, culture, and the relationship between the two to contextualize the research framework. It also addressed cultural implications for women's aspirations in the workplace. The thesis utilized a survey as a main methodological approach to obtain the primary set of data, with the support of a literature review to build the framework. In an aim to address cultural influence on women's leadership across the E&W as per the division indicated in the study. It then addressed the findings and discussion to the data obtained. This last section will highlight the conclusion of the findings to the research question, implications, and future study suggestions.

Leadership definition, theory and different styles were explored. Indicating that leadership is about influencing the team to attain mutual results. Studies showed that certain leadership styles are attributed to women, and more leadership characteristics are associated with masculinity. Cultural definition and the various dimensions from different scholars were explained; these were grouped into two divisions, E&W, which clearly illustrated that culture has a major impact in the workplace. The study showed extreme values from the two divisions, which concluded that Women in the West, due to their culture, have better chances of becoming leaders. Furthermore, statistics across the globe and GGGI statistics were addressed, which showed that women globally face barriers due to cultural norms, and it also showed a huge disparity in the Eastern region compared to the West. With more effort being made in the Western region, it is, however, slow and even more so in the Eastern region.

The research and survey findings exhibited that culture does indeed have an influence on women's aspiration to become leaders. It also showed that contrary to what theoretical study indicate, resemblances arise. Women's roles across the globe are similar due to their biological and historical roles. Which is a shared challenge faced by women in the workplace. It also mirrored statistics indicating that Western regions are better at fostering an environment for women's aspirations.

The survey showed great insights into women's aspirations in attaining leadership roles, which suggests great implications. Women's representation in management positions globally is low, but even more in the East compared to the West. There is a need for the government to eradicate inequality in the workplace increasingly for the Eastern region to close the disparities. Starting

with supporting women to participate in the workforce far more. For both regions, it is suggested to take Norway as an example and implement similar policies that Norway adopts; these were apparent in parental leave, where equal rights were given to men and women, showing a positive trend in its political empowerment participation rate. Both regions need more representation across various industries. Actions should be implied strongly towards discrimination in the workplace more for women in the Eastern region. Mentorship and training should be applied to support women in addressing concerns and barriers to boost their confidence and break stereotypes. Work-life balance was a shared concern across both regions; working from home and flexible working hours should be implemented across various sectors globally to support women in moving into leadership roles. Cross-cultural exposure of women from the West to the East with women in leadership positions will help establish a connection and share the similar and different concerns each faces to advocate for a change across the globe, more so for Eastern women. Women themselves, along with organizational and societal policy change, will help break societal norms for a future of more women leaders across the globe.

This research showed discrepancies in the literature review that were not foreseen. This is believed to be due to the low number of participants in the Western division, which requires further exploration. Future research should delve into more reasons why disparities occur in these two regions by exploring the policies in these countries. Further, it is also suggested that these two regions be divided into smaller regions of more similar cultures, such as the one used by the GLOBE. Religion and political system were purposefully left out in the thesis. However, it is believed to have an influence on why women don't aspire to become leaders, which future research can discover.

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7. Appendices

Appendix A

Survey results

Unveiling the Cultural Dynamics of Women's leadership: Comparison between East & West

92	06:32	Active
Responses	Average time to complete	Status

1. Gender (This survey is designed to gather insights from individuals who were assigned female at birth. Your input is valuable, and we appreciate your participation. If you do not meet these criteria, we kindly ask that you refrain from taking this survey, as it is tailored to the experiences and perspectives of women)

● Woman	81	
● Man	9	
● Non-binary	2	
● Transgender	0	
● Prefer not to say / other	0	

2. What is your age group?

🔵	18-24 years	4
🟠	25-34 years	39
🟢	35-48 years	32
🔴	49-60 years	8
🟣	Below or above stated age grou...	0

3. Where are you originally from? (For the purposes of this survey, Western regions include countries in Europe, North America, and Australia, while Eastern regions encompass countries in Asia, Russia and the Middle East. African and South American countries are considered separately due to their unique cultural identity. Please select the region that best represents your country)

🔵	Western Region	23
🟠	Eastern Region	53
🟢	Africa or South America	2
🔴	Not Sure	5

4. What's your level of education?

🔵	High school/ Diploma/ Technica...	5
🟠	Bachelor's Degree	31
🟢	Master's Degree	29
🔴	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) / D...	10
🟣	Other	1

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5. Which occupational group best describe you?

- 🔵 Corporate/Executive Leadership:... 5
- 🟠 Management/Supervisory Roles... 15
- 🟢 Technical Professionals: Occupat... 27
- 🔴 Non-Technical Professionals: Su... 7
- 🟣 Banking / Financial Services / In... 6
- 🟤 Healthcare: Healthcare professio... 1
- 🟣 Public Sector/Government: Gov... 1
- ⚫ IT / Administrative work 4
- 🟡 Professor/ Lecturer / Teacher 6
- 🔵 Arts and Culture: Artists, musicia... 0
- 🔵 Entrepreneur/Small Business Ow... 1
- 🟠 Stay-at-Home Parent 1
- 🟢 Other 2
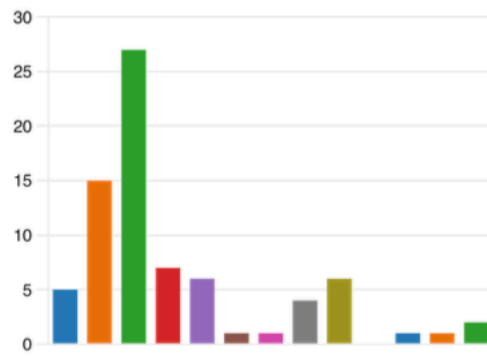
6. Which Industry are you working for?

- 🔵 Technology and IT: This group i... 7
- 🟠 Finance and Banking: This categ... 6
- 🟢 Healthcare and Medical: This gr... 3
- 🔴 Education and Academia: Organ... 8
- 🟣 Manufacturing and Production: ... 2
- 🟤 Energy: This group includes ind... 37
- 🟣 Media, Communication and Ent... 3
- ⚪ Beauty and Cosmetics: This cate... 1
- 🟡 Transportation and Logistics: Thi... 1
- 🔵 Consumer Goods and Retail: Ind... 0
- 🔵 Real Estate and Construction: In... 0
- 🟠 Tourism and Hospitality: This se... 1
- 🟢 Professional Services: This categ... 3
- 🔴 Other 4

49
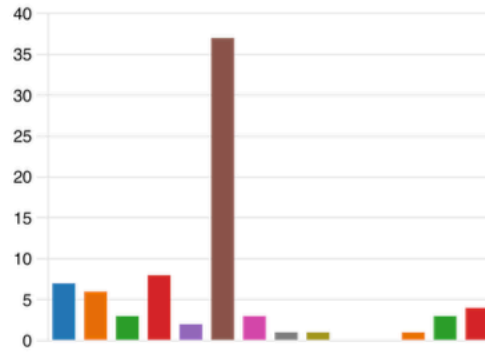
7. Do you aspire to hold a leadership position in your career?

🔵 Yes	63	
🟠 No	8	
🟢 Not Sure	5	
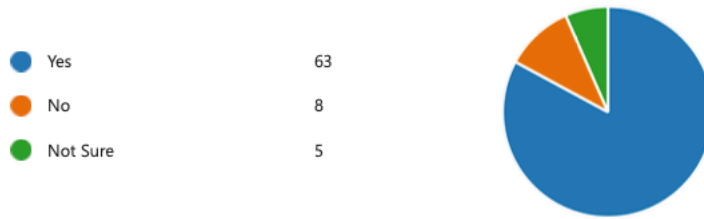
8. To what extent do you feel that cultural norms and values impact your perception of women in leadership roles?

3.39
Average Rating
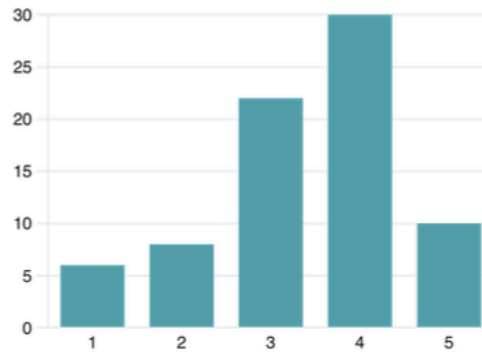
9. How do you perceive the influence of traditional gender roles on your leadership aspirations?

3.28
Average Rating
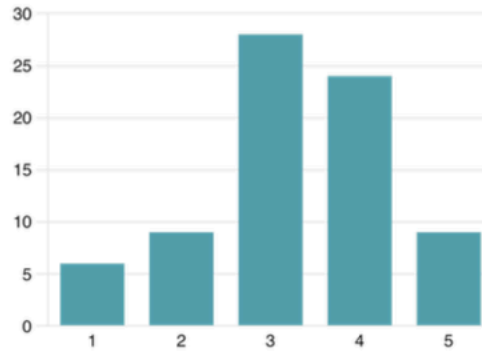
10. Have you ever had to adapt or modify your leadership aspirations to align with cultural norms or expectations? (influenced by internal factor)

● Yes	37	
● No	39	

11. Have you experienced any family or societal expectations that influenced your decision to pursue or not pursue leadership roles? (influenced by external factor)

● Yes	27
● No	49
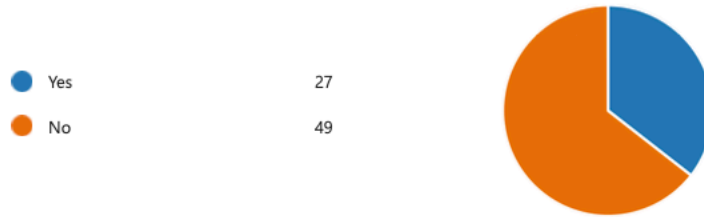
12. How supportive do you find your current workplace environment in fostering women's leadership aspirations?

3.68
Average Rating
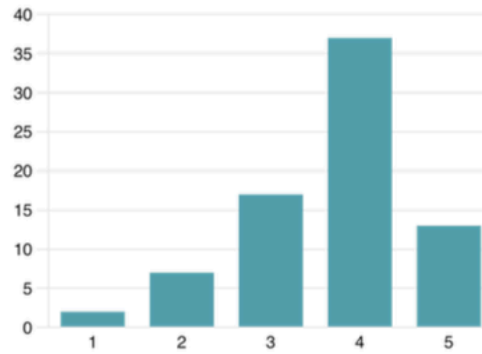
13. How do you perceive the representation of women in leadership roles in your culture?

3.29
Average Rating
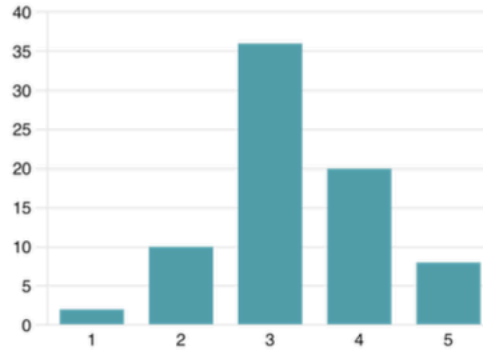
14. Have you been influenced by any cultural icons or role models who are women in leadership?

- ● Yes   53
- ● No   23

15. What personal motivations or factors drive your desire to pursue a leadership role?

🔵	Passion for the Field	17
🟠	Desire for Impact or Influence	29
🟢	Professional Growth	37
🔴	Inspiration from Role Models	10
🟣	Challenging Stereotypes / Balan...	9
🟤	Mentorship and Support	9
🩷	Financial Security	19
⚪	Other	1
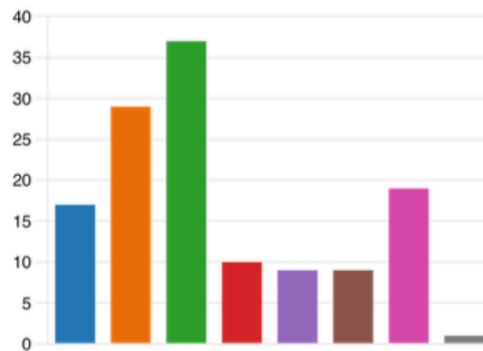
16. Based on your observations, do you perceive any differences in how women's leadership aspirations are influenced by culture between Western and Eastern societies?

🔵	Yes	56
🟠	No	3
🟢	Not sure	17

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17. Since you selected yes, do you believe the influence is because of any of the following?

🔵	Family Expectations	6
🟠	Societal Norms	19
🟢	Gender Stereotypes	12
🔴	Lack of Role Models	2
🟣	All of the above	17
🟤	Other	0
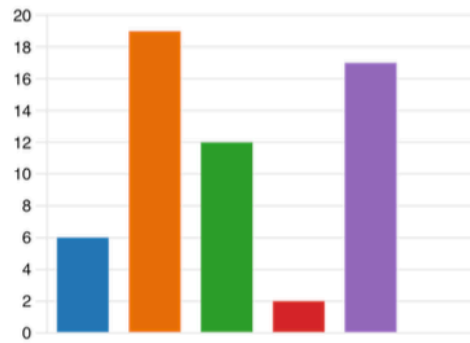
18. Since you selected no, do you believe the influence is because of any of the following?

● Supportive Environment	0	
● Personal Drive	1	
● Equal Opportunity Beliefs	1	
● Strong Mentorship	0	
● All of the above	1	
● Other	0	

19. Is there anything else you would like to share about how cultural influences impact your leadership aspirations?

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Responses

Latest Responses

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Appendix B

Bar chart showing percentage points by region:

Region	Percentage points
Europe	76.3%
North America	75.0%
Latin America and the Caribbean	74.3%
Eurasia and Central Asia	69.0%
East Asia and the Pacific	68.8%
Sub-Saharan Africa	68.2%
Southern Asia	63.4%
Middle East and North Africa	62.6%

Percentage points
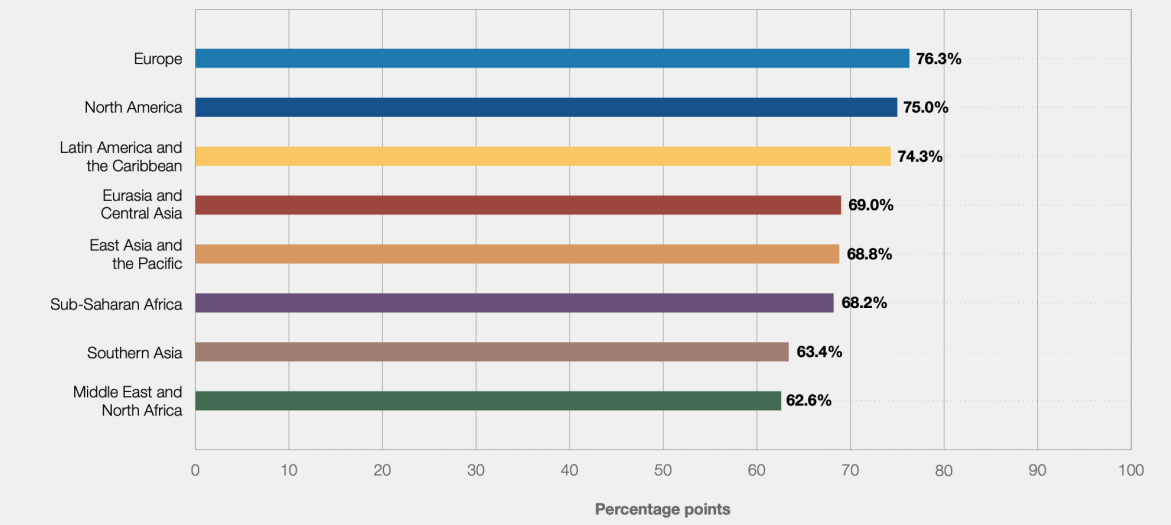
Appendix C

The below are definitions copied from WEF, 2023):

Gender Pay gap, is defined as the difference between male and female median wages divided by male median wages. Wages are computed for full-time equivalent dependent employees and are expressed in US$ using current exchange rates and US$ Purchasing Power Parity rates (PPPs) for private consumption expenditures as conversion factors. For more details about the computation of wage estimates

Length of paid parental leave, calendar days Parental leave refers to leave available equally to parents – regardless of gender – for the purpose of childcare immediately following maternity and paternity leave OR instead of maternity and paternity leave. Where the paid leave period is available only by sex, it is indicated under "female" or "male". Where the leave period can be shared amongst the parents as they choose, the length of the paid leave period is indicated under "Value".

Women advancement to leadership role, 1-7 (best) Response to the survey question, "In your country, to what extent do companies provide women with the same opportunities as men to rise to positions of leadership?" 1=not at all; 7=to a great extent.

Labor force participation rate, 1 million people (%) Total number of people (M/F) participating in the labour force. The ratio is the percentage of women participating in the labour force with respect to the total labour force.

Wage equality for similar work, 1–7 (best) Response to the World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey question, "In your country, for similar work, to what extent are wages for women equal to those of men?" (1 = not at all, significantly below those of men; 7 = fully, equal to those of men).

Appendix D

Hofstede Model (79)		GLOBE Model(62)	
Asia *(24)*	Arab World(Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates) Bangladesh China Hong Kong India Indonesia Iran Israel Japan Malaysia Pakistan Philippines Singapore Korea Taiwan Thailand Turkey Vietnam	Asia*(18)*	China Georgia Hong Kong India Indonesia Iran Israel Japan Kazakhstan Kuwait Malaysia Philippines Qatar Singapore Korea Taiwan Thailand Turkey
Europe *(26)*	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Czech Republic Denmark Estonia Finland France Germany Greece Hungary Ireland Italy Luxembourg Malta Netherlands Norway Poland Portugal Romania Russia Slovakia Spain Sweden Switzerland United Kingdom	Europe*(22)*	Albania Austria Czech Republic Denmark England Finland France Greece Germany-East (former GDR) Germany-West (former FRG) Hungary Ireland Italy Netherlands Poland Portugal Russia Slovenia Spain Sweden Switzerland Switzerland-FR
Africa *(9)*	East Africa(Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia) Morocco South Africa West Africa(Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone)	Africa *(8)*	Egypt Morocco Namibia Nigeria South Africa(Black Sample) South Africa(White Sample) Zambia Zimbabwe
North America *(3)*	Canada Mexico United States	North America*(3)*	Canada (English speaking) USA Mexico
South American *(15)*	Argentina Brazil Chile Colombia Costa Rica Ecuador El Salvador Guatemala Jamaica Panama Peru Surinam Trinidad Uruguay Venezuela	South American *(9)*	Argentina Bolivia Brazil Colombia Costa Rica Ecuador El Salvador Guatemala Venezuela
Australia *(2)*	Australia New Zealand	Australia*(2)*	Australia New Zealand

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Country	Power Distance		Uncertainty Avoidance		Individualism/ Collectivism		Masculinity/ Femininity		Long-/Short-Term Orientation	
	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank	Index	Rank
Argentina	49	35-36	86	10-15	46	22-23	56	20-21		
Australia	36	41	51	37	90	2	61	16	31	22-24
Austria	11	53	70	24-25	55	18	79	2	31[a]	22-24
Belgium	65	20	94	5-6	75	8	54	22	38[a]	18
Brazil	69	14	76	21-22	38	26-27	49	27	65	6
Canada	39	39	48	41-42	80	4-5	52	24	23	30
Chile	63	24-25	86	10-15	23	38	28	46		
Colombia	67	17	80	20	13	49	64	11-12		
Costa Rica	35	42-44	86	10-15	15	46	21	48-49		
Denmark	18	51	23	51	74	9	16	50	46[a]	10
Ecuador	78	8-9	67	28	8	52	63	13-14		
Finland	33	46	59	31-32	63	17	26	47	41[a]	14
France	68	15-16	86	10-15	71	10-11	43	35-36	39[a]	17
Germany	35	42-44	65	29	67	15	66	9-10	31	22-24
Great Britain	35	42-44	35	47-48	89	3	66	9-10	25	28-29
Greece	60	27-28	112	1	35	30	57	18-19		
Guatemala	95	2-3	101	3	6	53	37	43		
Hong Kong	68	15-16	29	49-50	25	37	57	18-19	96	2
Indonesia	78	8-9	48	41-42	14	47-48	46	30-31		
India	77	10-11	40	45	48	21	56	20-21	61	7
Iran	58	29-30	59	31-32	41	24	43	35-36		
Ireland	28	49	35	47-48	70	12	68	7-8	43[a]	13
Israel	13	52	81	19	54	19	47	29		
Italy	50	34	75	23	76	7	70	4-5	34[a]	19
Jamaica	45	37	13	52	39	25	68	7-8		
Japan	54	33	92	7	46	22-23	95	1	80	4
Korea (South)	60	27-28	85	16-17	18	43	39	41	75	5
Malaysia	104	1	36	46	26	36	50	25-26		
Mexico	81	5-6	82	18	30	32	69	6		
Netherlands	38	40	53	35	80	4-5	14	51	44	11-12
Norway	31	47-48	50	38	69	13	8	52	44[a]	11-12
New Zealand	22	50	49	39-40	79	6	58	17	30	25-26
Pakistan	55	32	70	24-25	14	47-48	50	25-26	0	34
Panama	95	2-3	86	10-15	11	51	44	34		
Peru	64	21-23	87	9	16	45	42	37-38		
Philippines	94	4	44	44	32	31	64	11-12	19	31-32
Portugal	63	24-25	104	2	27	33-35	31	45	30[a]	25-26
South Africa	49	35-36	49	39-40	65	16	63	13-14		
Salvador	66	18-19	94	5-6	19	42	40	40		
Singapore	74	13	8	53	20	39-41	48	28	48	9
Spain	57	31	86	10-15	51	20	42	37-38	19[a]	31-32
Sweden	31	47-48	29	49-50	71	10-11	5	53	33	20
Switzerland	34	45	58	33	68	14	70	4-5	40[a]	15-16
Taiwan	58	29-30	69	26	17	44	45	32-33	87	3
Thailand	64	21-23	64	30	20	39-41	34	44	56	8
Turkey	66	18-19	85	16-17	37	28	45	32-33		
Uruguay	61	26	100	4	36	29	38	42		
United States	40	38	46	43	91	1	62	15	29	27
Venezuela	81	5-6	76	21-22	12	50	73	3		
Yugoslavia	76	12	88	8	27	33-35	21	48-49		
Regions:										
Arab countries	80	7	68	27	38	26-27	53	23		
East Africa	64	21-23	52	36	27	33-35	41	39	25	28-29
West Africa	77	10-11	54	34	20	39-41	46	30-31	16	33

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Appendix E

Legend: Egypt × | India × | Saudi Arabia × | South Korea ×

	Egypt	India	Saudi Arabia	South Korea
Power Distance	80	77	72	60
Individualism	13	24	48	18
Motivation towards Achievement and Success	55	56	43	39
Uncertainty Avoidance	55	40	64	85
Long Term Orientation	22	51	27	100
Indulgence	0	26	14	29

Legend: Norway × | Saudi Arabia × | South Korea × | United States ×

	Norway	Saudi Arabia	South Korea	United States
Power Distance	31	72	60	40
Individualism	81	48	18	60
Motivation towards Achievement and Success	8	43	39	62
Uncertainty Avoidance	50	64	85	46
Long Term Orientation	55	27	100	50
Indulgence	55	14	29	68

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Norway × **Saudi Arabia** ×

	Power Distance	Individualism	Motivation towards Achievement and Success	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long Term Orientation	Indulgence
Norway	31	81	8	50	55	55
Saudi Arabia	72	48	43	64	27	14

Greece × **Norway** × **United Kingdom** × **United States** ×

	Power Distance	Individualism	Motivation towards Achievement and Success	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long Term Orientation	Indulgence
Greece	60	59	57	100	51	50
Norway	31	81	8	50	55	55
United Kingdom	35	76	66	35	60	69
United States	40	60	62	46	50	68